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**(72) Inventors; and**

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**(71) Applicant** (for AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BE, BG, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CY, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NA, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SY, SZ, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW only): **SHELL INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH MAATSCHAPPIJ B.V.** [NL/NL]; Carel van Bylandtlaan 30, NL-2596 HR The Hague (NL).

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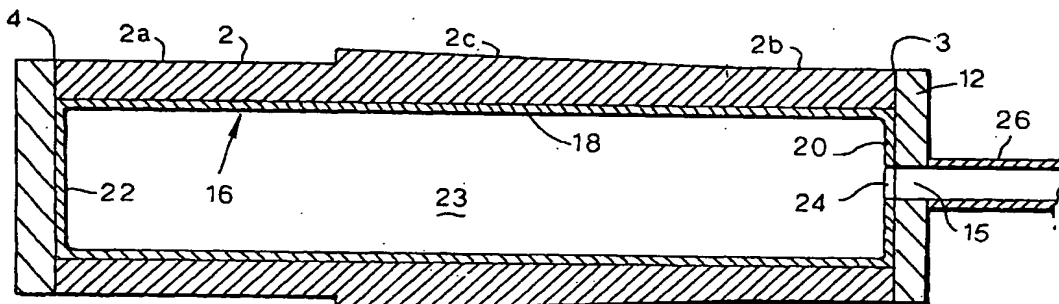
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**(71) Applicant (for CA only): SHELL CANADA LTD**  
**[CA/CA]; 400 - 4TH Avenue S.W., Calgary, Alberta T2P**  
**2H5 (CA).**

*For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.*

(54) Title: EXPANDER SYSTEM FOR STEPWISE EXPANSION OF A TUBULAR ELEMENT



**(57) Abstract:** An expander system for radially expanding a tubular element having an unexpanded portion of a first inner diameter, the expander system including an expander movable between a radially retracted mode and a radially expanded mode, the expander being operable to expand the tubular element from said first inner diameter to a second inner diameter larger than the first inner diameter by movement of the expander from the radially retracted mode to the radially expanded mode thereof, wherein the expander comprises a contact section of a diameter larger than said first inner diameter when the expander is in the radially retracted mode, and wherein said contact section is arranged to prevent axial movement of the expander through the unexpanded portion of the tubular element when the expander is in the radially retracted mode.

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